

## PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/74718>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2017-12-06 and may be subject to change.

## 14 Media attention to Fortuyn and LPF during the 2002 elections

### Negative bias or following the news routines?

Pytrik Schafraad, Peer Scheepers, and Fred Wester\*

The way in which Dutch news media covered the short career of Pim Fortuyn and the success and failure of his party LPF has been subject of discussion in both public debate and in academic circles. Research on the content of this news coverage is scarce and problematic. In this contribution we take the opportunity to investigate fourteen weeks of newspaper coverage on Fortuyn to find out in what way Dutch newspapers paid attention to Fortuyn. In the analysis we included volume, substantial and support attention. With this approach we also tried to shed some light on the question of biased news, which was raised in the public debate. Our study shows that at first the attention was focussed on the xenophobic message and unusual strategy of Fortuyn, but during the campaign and after his violent death, attention became more diverse in tone and topic. Therefore we conclude that negative bias cannot have been a decisive factor for the way newspapers paid attention to Fortuyn. Joining the argument of Hermans & van den Oever we argue that the dynamics of the newspaper attention rather followed the logic of news values such as surprise, magnitude, relevance and follow up.

### 14.1 Introduction

The unusual campaign and elections for the Dutch parliament in 2002 have had tremendous and lasting consequences. Not only did the political proportions change drastically, also greater general acceptance of exclusionist standpoints in politics and in public opinion has since become common practise. Last but not least, the relationship between politics and news media has changed (see Brants & Van Praag, 2006, p. 38). LPF figureheads, amongst others, thought established politicians and media responsible for the assassination of Pim Fortuyn.<sup>1</sup> True or not true, this critique lead to a process of self-reflection of journalists and editors.

The assumption that media were biased against Fortuyn and compared him to infamous far-right leaders such as Hans Janmaat and Jörg Haider were at the core of these accusations against the media. The term 'demonisation' became extremely popular as a

\* Pytrik Schafraad, Communication Science, Radboud University Nijmegen, +31-24-3616125, p.schafraad@maw.ru.nl. Peer Scheepers, Department of Methods of Social Science Research, Radboud University Nijmegen. Fred Wester, Communication Science, Radboud University Nijmegen.

Schafraad, P., Scheepers, P., & Wester, F. (2009). Media attention to Fortuyn and LPF during the 2002 elections. In R. P. Konig, P. W. M. Nelissen, & F. J. M. Huysmans (Eds.), *Meaningful media: Communication research on the social construction of reality* (pp. 188-200). Nijmegen, The Netherlands: Tandem Felix.

consequence of these statements, leaving the general impression that media reporting on Fortuyn had been biased extremely negatively.

Recently, media scholars investigated this question of biased reporting on Fortuyn and other contemporary far-right politicians in the Netherlands (Bosman & d'Haenens, 2008; Scholten & Ruigrok, 2008). Both studies found negative evaluations of far-right politicians (in casu Fortuyn and Wilders), however only Bosman and d'Haenens conclude that this is due to biased reporting and even demonisation of Fortuyn in one newspaper (2008, p. 746).

Whereas these scholars focussed on balance in news reporting, a different approach starts from what journalists normally do. In communication science there is an extensive body of literature on journalist routines and factors of newsworthiness (i.e. Gans, 1980; Galtung & Ruge, 1967; Harcup & O'Neil, 2001). From these studies we learned that journalists follow strong routines in the way they gather news, decide what is important and in the way they present news.

Political news reporting has professionalised over the last few decades and became more poll driven and less substantial, however journalists remain adhered to a sense of social responsibility (Brants & Van Praag, 2006, p. 38).

In other words there is a certain logic and professional standard behind reporting news, including news on political campaigns. The common practise of such professional routines makes it rather unlikely that reporting of news about Pim Fortuyn was extremely biased.

These two perspectives on media-attention to Fortuyn seem to be contradictory. In this study, we therefore investigate the media-attention characteristics during fourteen weeks of news about Fortuyn and his political party 'Lijst Pim Fortuyn' (hereafter LPF) and analyse continuities and changes in this coverage. In the analysis we distinguish four phases: The party building phase, the campaign phase, the post-murder phase and the negotiations phase, which will be explained later on. We take the results of the empirical study of media content to discuss whether the reporting was (extremely) negative, and if the way of reporting came about due to professional routines, or partisan animosity on the part of the journalists.

#### 14.1.1 The short political career of Pim Fortuyn

The parliamentary elections of May 2002 were very unusual. Never before, was a new party elected into parliament with 26 seats, and Dutch society witnessed its first political murder since World War II (Van Praag, 2003, p. 5). Central to the unusual events was former academic, columnist and new politician Pim Fortuyn. Here we sketch the main lines of his political career, as it is the setting of our study.

Before the start of his political career, Fortuyn was a columnist for the weekly *Elsevier* and wrote several books, of which *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur* [Against the Islamisation of our culture] (Fortuyn, 1997) is the most well known. His political ideas developed from socialist in the 1980s to liberal in the 1990s and libertarian and nationalist by the turn of the century (Pels, 2003; Van Praag, 2003, p. 9). After the 9 / 11 events, Fortuyn drew a lot of attention with statements like 'close the borders' and 'Islam is a backward religion' (Van Praag, 2003, p. 9). In November 2001 he was elected party leader for the populist party *Leefbaar Nederland* [LN].

To some within LN however, he was too radical. On February 9th 2002, *de Volkskrant* published an interview with Fortuyn, where he proposed to get rid of the anti-discrimination article in the Dutch constitution. The interview soon led to Fortuyn's redundancy as party leader. Meanwhile, Fortuyn was still party leader for the Rotterdam local party *Leefbaar Rotterdam* [LR]. He also directly announced the erection of his own party, *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* [LPF].<sup>2</sup> In little more than two months, Fortuyn had to select suitable people as candidates, set up a party structure and come up with a party programme. LPF attracted a lot of political adventurers, of whom some were indeed selected as MP candidates and later elected into the Dutch parliament.

In March, Fortuyn's LR won the local elections in Rotterdam. In the national polls he was also booming (Synovate, 2002). In the campaign Fortuyn drew attention with his statements, by inviting journalists into his home (Hermans & Van den Oever, chap. 16 in this volume), and by his debating style in radio and television debates (Van Praag, 2003, p. 13). In the debates he distinguished himself by his directness against liberal leader Dijkstal and social democrat leader Melkert, but also by walking away when confronted with critical replies of green-left leader Rosemuller. Instead of a party programme, Fortuyn published a book about the mess that, in his opinion, the governing parties created in the past eight years (Fortuyn, 2002).

In the midst of the heat of this campaign, Fortuyn was assassinated by an environmental activist on May 6th, nine days before election day. After this national crisis, the election campaign was officially stopped. Despite Fortuyn's violent death, LPF entered parliament with 26 seats (17% of the votes). The party took part in the negotiations for a new coalition government, and eventually became part of the first government led by Christian-democratic Prime Minister Balkenende.

#### 14.1.2 Bias towards Fortuyn and other far-right politicians

In the literature, as well as in public debate, the question to which political family Fortuyn (and the LPF) belonged, has been asked (Pels, 2003; Ignazi, 2006). Others rather assume Fortuyn did not really belong to the far-right (Bosman & d'Haenens, 2008). Here we follow both Ignazi (2006, p. 32) and Fennema (2005), who argue that the far-right is a heterogeneous group of parties. Both distinguish between traditional or extreme far-right parties and contemporary (racist or populist) far-right parties. Whereas the Dutch party *Centrumdemocraten* had characteristics of both the traditional and racist far-right, the LPF can be characterised mainly as populist far-right (Ignazi, 2006).

Research on media-attention to the far-right showed that media applied a media-image of controversial outsiders to describe the far-right, whereby especially in the eighties and early nineties the emphasis was on the controversial characteristics of the far-right and an increase of more diverse and nuanced media-attention started in the second half of the nineties. This change continued stronger, when Fortuyn entered the political arena, although the controversial outsider image remained dominant (Schafraad, Wester & Scheepers, 2009). Others concentrated on the balance between negative and positive tone in media coverage of the far-right. Scholten et al. found that others (politicians, commentators and the like) mostly reacted negatively to far-right politician Wilders in the news (2009). Newspaper attention to Fortuyn contained a lot of framing, which is automatically viewed as negative bias by Bosman and d'Haenens (2008).

All these studies support Hallin and Mancini's statement that although political journalism has professionalised and media are no longer connected to political parties, this does not mean that political news has become neutral (2004, p. 180). Others found that news media are rather centrifugal, as they mostly adhere to dominant powers and criticise outsiders, which Fortuyn was until his death (Gitlin, 1980; Krouwel, 2008). Following this line of arguments, critical reporting or even biased reporting towards the LPF can thus be expected.

### 14.1.3 Professional routines

Negative news does not automatically mean that journalists are biased against Fortuyn. News production is news selection in the first place, which happens according to a standardised set of criteria. Contemporary selection criteria, relevant in this context, are: surprise, bad news, magnitude, relevance and follow-up (Harcup & O'Neil, 2001, p. 278-279). These criteria were found in recent research on news construction, as reported elsewhere in this volume, as well (Hermans & Van den Oever, chap. 16).

Not only news selection is subject to standardisation, also the rest of news production is highly routinised (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). In the process of professionalisation that news production has gone through in recent decades, news has become subject to specific quality standards (Brants & Van Praag, 2006; Buijs, 2008). Professional journalist quality standards are: factuality, balance, neutral presentation, completeness and relevance (Westerthal, 1983; Brants & Van Praag, 2006; Buijs, 2008; see also Hermans & Van den Oever, chap. 16). The latter authors also found that, although journalist may have their private political preferences, they adhere to these professional quality standards in their reporting on Fortuyn. Critical investigation and reporting thus may not be mistaken for biased reporting.

From this body of literature it can be expected that media attention to Fortuyn was subject to news routines based on the mentioned news values, instead of on journalists' political sentiments. In the case media attention would depend on political preferences of journalists and these would be against Fortuyn, media attention would constantly or increasingly be focussed on 'negative aspects' of his standpoints and campaign strategy. However we expect the news on Fortuyn to be the product of news values as argued above. Drawing from Harcup and O'Neil (2001) and Hermans and Van den Oever (chap. 16) we see five especially influential news values here. These news values are 'bad news' (stories on conflict and tragedy), 'surprise' (stories that have elements of contrast / surprise), 'magnitude' (potential impact) and 'relevance' (perceived as relevant by the public) and, due to the political process (elections), also to 'follow up' (Harcup & O'Neil, 2001, p. 279). If these news values are indeed decisive, we may expect the media attention to Fortuyn to change from phase to phase, as specific events in each phase trigger the news values differently.

### 14.1.4 Hypotheses

Just before the first research phase, Fortuyn made his controversial, and in many people's view, xenophobic statements and the erection of LPF was a direct consequence of this. Bad news and surprise were dominant news values here. Attention would be on the xenophobic statements and the surprise move of LN leadership and that of Fortuyn.

Hypothesis 1: In the ‘party building’ phase the content of most media-attention was unfavourable for Fortuyn.

Due to Fortuyn's increasing popularity and the uniqueness of his booming career and polls, relevance and surprise became more important news selection criteria and newspapers focused more on these unique successes in their reporting. Meanwhile the controversiality (bad news) remained a highly relevant criterion and thus attention to xenophobic statements and other ‘bad news’ was still on a significantly high level. This leads to hypothesis two.

Hypothesis 2: During the campaign, the content of most media-attention became significantly more favourable for Fortuyn.

Fortuyn's sudden death turned all routines upside down, even more so due to the heavy critique on the role of the media (see Hermans & Van den Oever, chap. 16). Therefore we expect unfavourable news about Fortuyn to be completely absent from the news in the first weeks after his death, when he also posthumously won the national elections (surprise, magnitude).

Hypothesis 3: In the post-murder weeks, media-attention is completely favourable to Fortuyn.

As Fortuyn himself was slowly replaced in the headlines by his LPF successors who engaged in negotiations for a new government and internal affairs in the party follow another quickly, these issues become central to the media-attention again, as the routines regain their traditional place after the shock of Fortuyn's death and posthumous electoral victory fade out. In other words, surprise (bad news) combined with magnitude became the most important news selection criteria.

Hypothesis 4: In the negotiations phase, bad news and magnitude selection criteria cause a strong increase of unfavourable emphasis in the news and a decrease of favourable emphasis.

## 14.2 Research design

In the context of the PhD project of the first author, we gathered content analysis data on media-attention to Fortuyn and the LPF in 14 weeks around the 2002 parliamentary elections from three Dutch newspapers. The data stretch out from early March to one month after the elections, held on May 15th, 2002. We distinguish four phases within these three months. Weeks 1 to 5 are the ‘party building phase’, when Fortuyn was establishing his new party LPF. Weeks 6 to 8 are the ‘campaign phase’. The elections were held only in week 10, but the campaign was stopped after the assassination of Fortuyn on May 6th. The third phase contains the reactions and events directly following the assassination, as well as Fortuyn's posthumous electoral victory, this is the ‘post-murder phase’. In the last three weeks, coverage of the aftermath of both key events retreats to the background and is replaced by news on the formation of a new coalition

government, which eventually ended in a government including the LPF; the ‘negotiations phase’.

We selected all news and background articles from three daily newspapers in the Dutch media landscape ( $N = 802$ ). From this selection we drew a random sample of 337 news articles, proportionally divided over the three news papers: *NRC Handelsblad* ( $n = 122$ ), *De Telegraaf* ( $n = 79$ ) and *de Volkskrant* ( $n = 136$ ), which we used for the content analysis.

In order to get a grip on the way Fortuyn and other prominent LPF members featured in the news, we analysed 5 aspects of media attention. First, the volume of attention measured in the number of news articles that covered them per week.

Then three dimensions of what we labelled substantial attention (Schafraad et al., 2008, 2009). The first of these is representation. This indicator measures whether Fortuyn was only written about (passive representation), or paraphrased or cited (active representation). In this way we get an indication of the interest of news media for Fortuyn. Also, this indicator provides a direct answer to the question, if Fortuyn was ignored by journalists, which is another accusation to the press stemming from the far-right (Fennema & Van der Brug, 2006). Then, we looked at the headlines and distinguished between headlines favourable to Fortuyn (e.g., “Pim stijf op kop in opiniepeilingen” [Pim leading the polls], *De Telegraaf*, March 16, 2002) and those unfavourable to Fortuyn (e.g., “Lijst LPF: haastklus met grote problemen” [List LPF: hasty job with major problems], *de Volkskrant*, April 25, 2002). A third indicator of substantial attention that we used is presence of stigmatising associations in the article. These include associations with the Nazis, or extremist violent groups, such as neo-Nazis, or skinheads. Presence of such associations contributes to a negative image of Fortuyn and may function as disqualifiers in electoral competition (Schafraad et al., 2008, p. 365, Van Donseelaar & Rodrigues, 2003, p. 63).

The fifth and last aspect of media-attention that we analysed is support attention. More specific, we looked at the presence of attitudes towards Fortuyn or other actors, such as politicians, civilians, government officials etc. These were also categorised as favourable towards Fortuyn and unfavourable towards Fortuyn.

Thus, in contrast to previous research on media-attention to Fortuyn (Bosman & d’Haenens, 2009), we analysed multiple aspects (volume, substantial and support attention) of this media-attention, and allowed for pro- and contra-Fortuyn bias.

## 14.3 Results

### 14.3.1 Volume attention

Figure 14.1 shows that in the weeks before the actual election campaign started, 20 to 30 articles about Fortuyn featured per week in three newspapers together. The only exception is the week when Fortuyn’s book, that sort of replaced the non-existent LPF party programme, was released (Fortuyn, 2002). In that week almost 70 articles, often with collected comments on and analyses of Fortuyn’s book, appeared. Every week further into the election campaign shows increased electoral support and produced more news on Fortuyn, as expected, but the highest peaks in the news were in the two weeks following his assassination. Not included in these figures are the opinion pages in the newspapers that were filled with commentary and dozens of reader’s letters, as we found

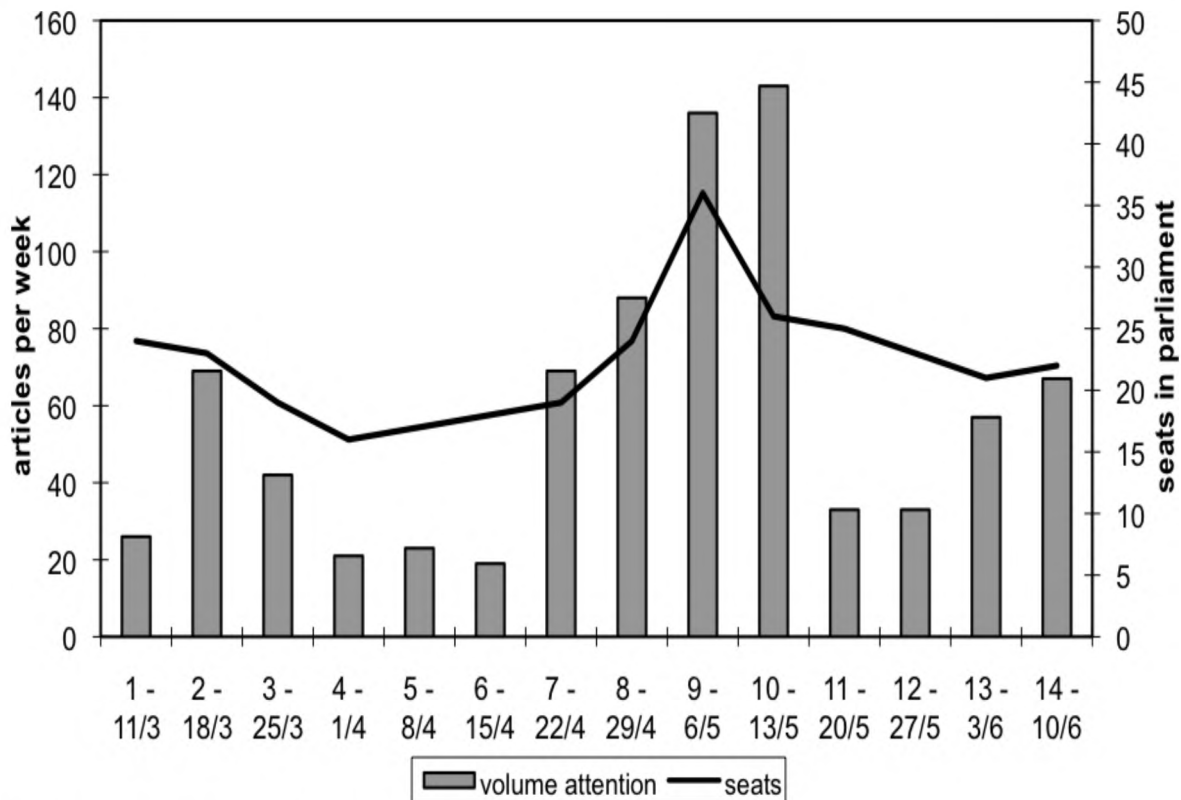


Figure 14.1 Volume attention and Polls

out during the collection of the newspaper articles for the content analysis. This flood of news input and commentary dried out after two weeks, when the amount of news dropped back to proportions of the same size as before the elections. From the second week of the ‘negotiations phase’ on, the volume of attention started increasing again.

### 14.3.2 Representation

One relevant aspect of substantial attention here is whether Fortuyn is represented in a passive (just mentioned) or active (paraphrased or cited) fashion (see Figure 14.2). A low level of active representation suggests a greater distance between journalist (and reader) on the one hand and the subject on the other. The latter is ‘not involved’ but only ‘talked about’ in the case of passive representation.

Exactly 50% of all articles contains active representation of Fortuyn. In week 12 and 14 even up to 79 and 73%, while in week 3 (‘party building phase’) and 6 (start of ‘campaign phase’), Fortuyn is mostly written about, without being a source himself (33% active representation).

In the ‘party building phase, Fortuyn was actively represented in about 40 to 50% of the coverage. In the campaign phase, active representation increased steadily from 33 to 52%. In the election week, LPF is more often written about, without being an active source itself, however during the ‘post-murder phase’, active representation increased further to 58%. In the ‘negotiations phase active representation is at its highest level, between 60-80% of the coverage.



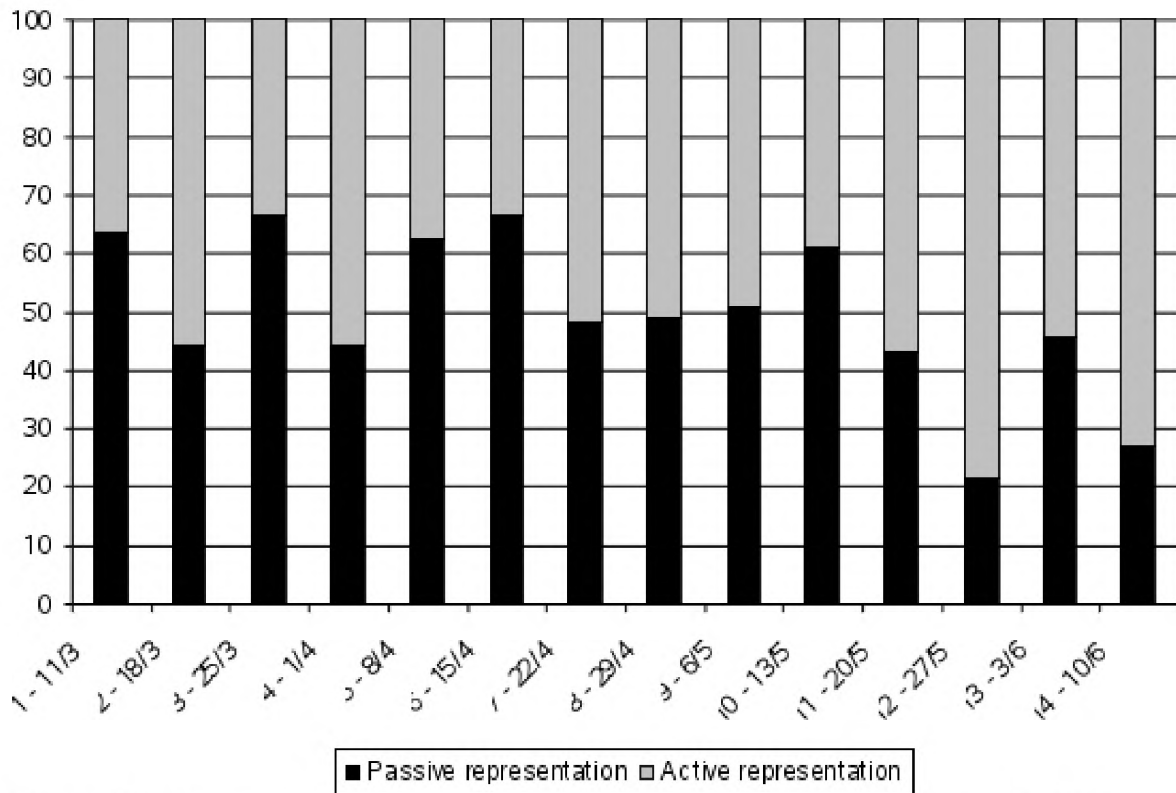


Figure 14.2 Representation of Fortuyn and LPF in the coverage per week (N = 337)

### 14.3.3 Headline tone

While the previous indicators of media attention give us information about in what way Fortuyn received attention, the following figures provide us with information about the balance between favourable and unfavourable messages about Fortuyn in the coverage.

As a first measure we coded whether the headline of each article contains the name of Fortuyn, the LPF or other main characters from within the LPF (chairman, candidates, financiers). 43% of all headlines contained one of these key words, or names. Secondly we coded whether these headlines were favourable or unfavourable for Fortuyn. When the tone of the headline was neutral, or not clearly leaning one way or the other it was coded as neutral. Figure 14.3 only shows the percentages of favourable or unfavourable headlines.

Interestingly, the majority of headlines did not include indicators of a favourable or unfavourable tone towards Fortuyn. In the 'party building phase' most of these headlines were unfavourable, but fluctuate between none to 33% of all headlines. Favourable headlines varied between absent and 25% per week. On average, 17% of all headlines in this phase was unfavourable and 9% favourable. In the 'campaign phase' the emphasis was the opposite, 14% favourable to 9% unfavourable. In the 'post-murder phase', favourable headlines increased suddenly up to 43% (average of 'post-murder phase' 22%), while unfavourable headlines became relatively seldom with 3-7% of the headlines each week. Finally, in the 'negotiation phase' outspoken headlines disappeared from most articles. About 5% was still unfavourable, while none were favourable.

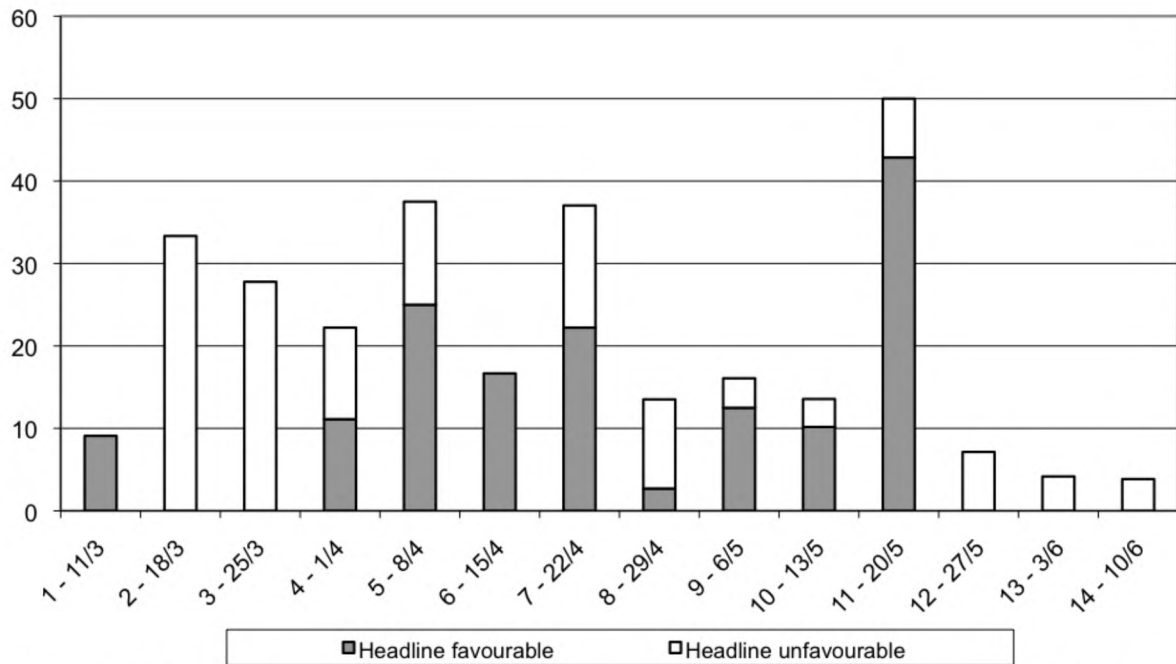


Figure 14.3 Headline tone towards Fortuyn and LPF in the coverage per week ( $N = 337$ )

#### 14.3.4 Stigmatising associations

The indicator ‘presence of stigmatising associations’ was created to measure to what extent newspapers use symbolically loaded references and terms to label far-right actors (see Figure 14.4). This measure includes reporting on such use by others, which turned out to be especially relevant in the case of Fortuyn. The majority of such references in the articles on Fortuyn reported on use of these terms, instead of journalists' use of them to label Fortuyn.

In 10% of all Fortuyn coverage we found stigmatising association, which is compared to coverage of other far-right parties, not much (Schafraad et al., 2008, 2009). About 7% of the coverage of Fortuyn in the ‘party building phase’ included stigmatising associations. In the ‘campaign phase’, these disappeared completely, except in the week (7) of the debate with social democrat leader Melkert, when comparing Fortuyn with the Nazis and reactions to these statements became a media hype (Vasterman, 2004). The

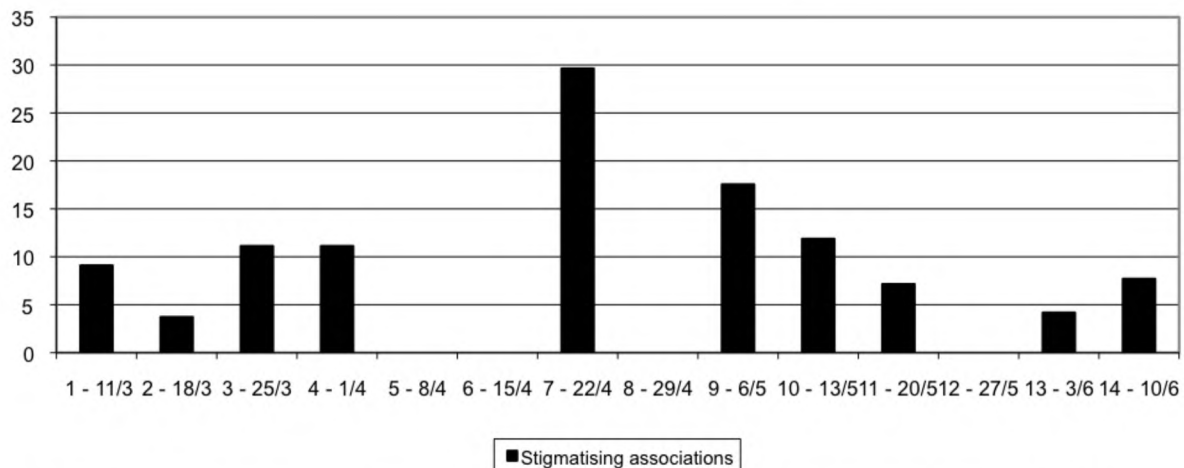


Figure 14.4 Presence of stigmatising associations in the coverage per week ( $N = 337$ )

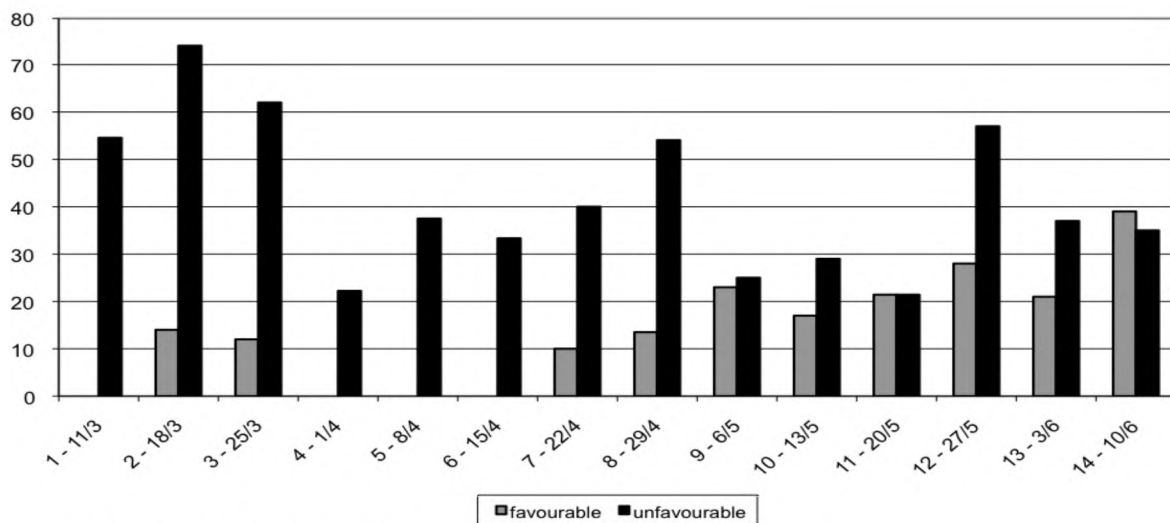


Figure 14.5 Support attention in the coverage per week ( $N = 337$ )

‘post murder phase’ shows a steady presence of stigmatising associations of about 12%. Further investigation showed that this is not so strange, as most of these were old stigmatising associations, recalled by the successors of Fortuyn, such as LPF chairman Langendam and party leader Herben. A real, but much smaller increase from 0 to 8% in the last week of the ‘negotiations week’ suggests that outsiders still saw resemblances between LPF and traditional far-right parties and figureheads.

### 14.3.5 Support attention

For support attention, we looked at the share of the coverage that included either favourable or unfavourable attitudes of non-far-right actors, such as competing politicians, government officials, or civil society actors (see Figure 14.5).

In 17% of all coverage we found favourable attitudes of non-far-right actors and about 40% contained unfavourable attitudes. This is a negative balance, one could say, but compared to other far-right parties it is not (Schafraad et al., 2008, 2009). Throughout the research phase we also found a development of an increasing emphasis on favourable attitudes (from 5% average in the ‘party building phase’ to 29% in the ‘negotiation phase’), while unfavourable attitudes remained dominant, but decreased significantly anyway (from 50% to 43%). The increase of attention for favourable attitudes is stable and steady. However, the decrease of attention to unfavourable attitudes is strongest in the ‘post-murder phase’, and returns to the level of the ‘campaign phase’, in the last couple of weeks. In three weeks there is a balance in the attention to favourable and unfavourable attitudes, week 9 (directly after the assassination), week 11 and week 14.

## 14.4 Conclusion and discussion

In this study we critically investigated news reporting on Fortuyn, just before and during the campaign, as well as directly after his assassination and in the first weeks of the negotiations for the formation of a new government coalition, in which Fortuyn's successors took part. A widely shared belief states that the dominant tone in the media was

extremely biased against Fortuyn. This statement found support of some communication scientists as well (i.e. Bosman & d'Haenens, 2008). An extensive body of literature argues that journalists are professionals, who follow specific news values, which makes it unlikely that they show their private opinions in their news reporting (Gans, 1980; Harcup & O'Neil, 2001). Elsewhere in this volume, Hermans and Van den Oever (chap. 16) found confirmation for this theory in their study of journalist practices during Fortuyn's political career. Looking at the content of newspaper reporting, we drew four hypotheses from this latter argument, each concentrating on one phase in the political career of Fortuyn. In this way we tried to answer our research question: *how did media-attention to Fortuyn change during the fourteen weeks between the erection of Fortuyn's LPF and the start of negotiations for a new government after the elections in 2002?*

Hypothesis 1 expected most media-attention in the 'party building' phase to be unfavourable to Fortuyn. The content analysis found nothing but support for this thesis. When Fortuyn featured in the news, he was mostly passively represented, twice as much headlines were unfavourable than favourable, almost all support attention in this phase was unfavourable to Fortuyn.

For the 'campaign phase', hypothesis 2 expected a more favourable media-attention to Fortuyn. In this second phase the analysis shows a change in the media-attention. Active representation no longer went up and down every week, but steadily rose; the share of favourable headlines increased every week, while that of unfavourable headlines is significantly lower than in the first phase and stigmatising associations were absent (except in the reporting on the debate that caused the media hype) (see above). Support attention was still dominantly unfavourable, but favourable attitudes appeared increasingly in the coverage, while unfavourable ones decreased. All in all, this supports our second hypothesis.

In the 'post-murder phase' that included election day and thus the posthumous victory of Fortuyn, hypothesis 3 expected completely favourable media-attention to Fortuyn. The results show a mixed picture, at first sight. Active representation and favourable headlines and mentioning of favourable attitudes of non-far-right actors increased sharply, as expected. However, stigmatising associations and unfavourable attitudes of non-far-right actors are still present, instead of disappearing. However, a deeper analysis of the material revealed that the majority of these stigmatising associations and unfavourable attitudes were in quotes of Fortuyn supporters and LPF leaders accusing the opposition and media of negative stereotyping of Fortuyn. The 'real' amount of stigmatising associations and unfavourable attitudes of non-far-right actors is therefore significantly lower than in the previous phases. Media attention for Fortuyn is thus not completely favourable to Fortuyn, but the share of unfavourable media attention is at a very low level, therefore we conclude that hypothesis 3 is largely confirmed.

Finally, hypothesis 4 expected a rise in unfavourable news in the 'negotiation phase' that followed. Favourable aspects of media attention decreased from the fourth week after the murder, while unfavourable ones increased from that same moment. The only exception is active representation that continued to increase, which can be explained by the shift of the attention to commentary of the (LPF) participants in the negotiations for a new coalition government. Hence hypothesis 4 is confirmed.

The general development in the media attention to Fortuyn largely followed the expectation, as we formulated them. Except for the third phase which is of course dominated by the news of Fortuyn's death, it also follows the media lifecycle of populist right

parties, as formulated by Steward et al. (2003). As Fortuyn had serious similarities with other far-right parties and because his unconventional strategy he received mainly unfavourable media attention in the first phase. In the second phase this unfavourable media attention continued, but was supplemented with favourable media attention, as he did well in the polls. The murder and electoral victory led to a lot of praise in the media in the third phase, followed by increasing critique and unfavourable media attention when this media hype was over and Fortuyn's successors entered the negotiations for a new coalition government.

These developments confirm the expectations that we drew from communication science theories about news values. As we see a changing dynamic in the media attention, we conclude that journalists followed professional routines and news values in their work, instead of following political antipathies. If the latter was the case, we would have seen media attention continuously dominated by unfavourable emphasis and tone. During the campaign, the uniqueness and expected impact of Fortuyn's participation in the elections drew increasingly more attention. His successes and the support for Fortuyn were not ignored at all. This conclusion finds supplemental support in the comparison with media-attention to other far-right parties. Favourable aspects received more attention, while unfavourable aspects received less attention and were less crude than news on previous Dutch far-right parties (see Schaafraad et al., 2009).

This means that in news institutions with high levels of professionalism, like the Dutch newspapers, news selection criteria also determine the content of the news for a large part. Unfavourable news content is a consequence of unfavourable, or negative events, in terms of unconventional behaviour of Fortuyn, or in terms of citations of himself, followers, or opposition. Therefore we must conclude that there was no demonisation, or extreme bias in the news on Fortuyn in Dutch newspapers in the weeks before and after the 2002 parliamentary elections.

## Notes

- 1 For example by LPF chairman Langendam in an interview with Parool and by Parool editor Sinnema in the weekly HP / De Tijd.
- 2 For reasons of convenience we speak of Fortuyn when we in fact mean Fortuyn's local party Leefbaar Rotterdam (LR), his national party Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF), or other main figures within these parties.

## References

- Bosman, J., & d'Haenens, L. (2008). News reporting on Pim Fortuyn: Framing in two Dutch newspapers. *Media, Culture and Society*, 30, 735-748.
- Brants, K., & Praag, P. Van (2006). Signs of media logic: Half a century of political communication in the Netherlands. *Javnost – the Public*, 13, 25-40.
- Buijs, K. (2008). *Journalistieke kwaliteit in het cross-mediale tijdperk*. Amsterdam: Boom onderwijs.
- Fennema, M. (2005). Populist parties of the right. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *Movements of exclusion: Radical right-wing populism in the Western World*. Hauppauge: Nova Science.

- Fennema, M., & Brug, W. van der (2006). Nederlandse anti-immigratiepartijen in perspectief. In F. van Tubergen & I. Maas, *Allochtonen in Nederland in internationale perspectief*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Fortuyn, P. (1997). *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur*. Uithoorn: Karakter.
- Fortuyn, P. (2002). *De puinhopen van acht jaar paars*. Uithoorn: Karakter.
- Gans, H. J. (1980). *Deciding what's news*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching. Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Harcup, T., & O'Neil, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2, 261-279.
- Halin, D., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, L., & Oever, M. van den. (2009). Construction of political news during Dutch elections 2002. In R. P. Konig, P. W. M. Nelissen, & F. J. M. Huysmans (Eds.), *Meaningful media: Communication research on the social construction of reality* (pp. 209-225). Nijmegen, The Netherlands: Tandem Felix.
- Ignazi, P. (2006). *Extreme right parties in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University press.
- Krouwel, A. (2008). *Links en rechts in het nieuws: Aandacht voor politieke partijen en politici in Nederlandse media*. Amsterdam: Centre for Applied Political Science.
- Pels, D. (2003). *De geest van Pim. Het gedachtegoed van een politieke dandy*. Amsterdam: Anthos.
- Praag, P. van (2003). Winners and losers in a turbulent political year. *Acta Politica*, 38, 5-22.
- Schafraad, P., Scheepers, P., & Wester, F. (2008). Dealing with 'the devil of the past'. Attention to the far-right in the German press (1987-2004). *Publizistik*, 53, 362-385.
- Schafraad, P., Wester, F., & Scheepers, P. (2009). Controversiële buitenstaanders: Een longitudinale studie naar de berichtgeving over ver rechts in Nederlandse dagbladen. *Migrantenstudies*, 25(4).
- Steward, J., Mazzoleni, G., & Horsfield, B. (2003). Conclusion: Power to the media managers. In G. Mazzoleni, J. Steward & B. Horsfield (Eds.), *The media and neopopulism: A contemporary comparative analysis* (pp. 217-237). Westport: Praeger.
- Synovate (2002). *Politieke Barometer*.
- Vasterman, P. (2004). *Media hype*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Westerstahl, J. (1983). Objective news reporting: General premises. *Communication Research*, 10(3), 403-424.